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Earnest Contention for the Faith.

A Charge

By the Bishop of Chicago.

THE
CATHEDRAL OF
SS. PETER AND PAUL,
CHICAGO.

EARNEST CONTENTION FOR THE FAITH.

A CHARGE

TO

THE FIFTY-FOURTH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE
DIOCESE OF CHICAGO,

BY

THE RIGHT REV. WILLIAM E. McLAREN, D.D., D.C.L.

THE CATHEDRAL OF SS. PETER AND PAUL,

Chic. May 26, 1891.

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A CHARGE.

"Thou, therefore, endure hardness, as a good soldier of JESUS CHRIST."—II Timothy ii. 3.

It is always a time of war with the Church of God on earth.

Our Lord came not to send peace on the earth but a sword, S. Matth. x. 34)—not, indeed, a sword of steel to hack and harry men into submission to God, but a spiritual sword for defence, rescue, and attack. The antagonism is unavoidable. Conciliation is possible only by the surrender of one of the opposite parties; peace can come only by conquest. Anti-Christian forces have always of necessity been implacable. The cry is "crucify Him," whether the lips that utter the cry be those of animalized unbelief, flippant rationalism, or mournful agnosticism.

It is peculiar to the present forms of attack upon Christianity, that laudations are heaped upon the character of Jesus as the ideal man; but observe also that these assaults are directed against the only means whereby His character is made known, and against the institutions which He established, of which His personality is the very life-blood. Sweep them away, and Jesus, the ideal man, must disappear with them. The assault on Christianity, therefore, is in effect the old cry, "crucify Him."

Another crucifixion cannot take place. In that we rest confident, because His Own promise puts bounds to the final prevalency of error; but it must not be forgotten that Omnipotence pledges victory only to the militant Church. Christians, summoned to do their part in such a conflict as that which is upon us now, the perils and menaces of which few of them seem to realize, are almost guilty of treason to their Lord, when they suffer the martial spirit to decline, and seek the tranquillities of peace on the very field of battle. There is a sickening unreality in the threadbare song,

"Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war;"

when there are officers and men falling asleep on their posts, or making the city of God noisy with intestine broils, the enemy meanwhile thundering at its gates. Christ's army needs fighting soldiers. The most effective organization in the world, for its purposes, is the Society of Jesus. We make no concession to the peculiar nature of some of its purposes when we declare its immeasurable power to lie in

the military form and spirit which its first general impressed upon it.

An honest survey of the mass of our intelligent Christian people is anything but reassuring. We must not be deceived by the signs of growth in certain directions. There are evidences of vacillation and timidity, because we are in the presence of vigorous antagonism. It looks as if there was a secret impression, painfully accepted, that Christianity must be made over again if it is to survive, and all the demands of its enemies be conceded, the creeds rewritten, the sacraments abolished, the ministry unfrocked, music concertised, sermons turned into lectures, the practice of holiness replaced by ethical culture,—in one word, a natural religion, with a thin gold-plating of Christianity, established. It looks as if many are more fearful of the cheap imputation of narrowness and bigotry, than of the more serious charge of indifference to the fate of the truth they profess. It looks as if the easy path to unpopularity now is to show some grit in the fight, and some willingness to suffer the chances of the field. It is perfectly certain that if, in the name of a spurious charity which is charitable only to the enemy, there is to be no revival of courage, swelling through the ranks like an enthusiasm, in behalf of the truths which have survived many a battle more fierce than this, there will be some day a pitiful multitude, misnamed Soldiers of the Cross, upon whom the awful penalty will fall of hearing no reply when, in the agonies of spiritual desolation, they ask : What is truth ?

There is no causal relation between the panic fears which sometimes spread through an army and the righteousness of the cause it represents. Under the holiest of banners there may be loss of spirit from temporary reverses, or internal dissensions, or betrayal by professed allies ; and the tonic needed to stimulate relaxed courage, is to point to the banner. In one of the darkest days of the war a meeting of despondent citizens was called, and gloomy orators deepened the shadows of the situation ; but a wierd woman, gaunt as a prophetess of Israel, rose and cleared the air with one word,—“ Is God dead ? ”

The time has come to protest against the timidity now observable among many Christians, as though they were more than half convinced that Christianity is simply, as has been said, “ one of the days of humanity,” now in its eventide, and soon to sink into midnight, to be succeeded by some more glorious day. Those who are distracted with unwilling doubts and dismayed at the jubilant cheering which reaches

them from the other side of the lines, with half suppressed response from traitors within the camp, and are repeating almost with tears the pathetic words of Cleopas, "we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (S. Luke xxiv. 21), can only contribute to the catastrophe they dread by giving way to a paralysis of soldierly courage which has no right or reason to justify it,—no right or reason, for the gospel of Jesus Christ is not a spent force, or a moribund cause, and it never can be, so long as there is a martyr left to die for it, and a *Defensor Fidei* in the skies to care for it.

We have met to-day as a Christian synod in this typical American city,—typical not as being what America was, but what America has become, the home of the many-tongued nations; and here, where all countries are pouring in their quotas to swell our population, we see the burning questions of the day forcing themselves forward. They seem to be many and various, but the real issue underlying all questions of religion and sociology is, whether modern civilization is to be moulded or not by the Incarnate God, Jesus Christ. And it would seem as if the charge put upon the conscience of every faithful soldier in His army is to be fearless and undismayed. There is no neutral territory. This is not a time to yield to what has been wisely termed the temptation of the age, "to try to find a middle path between faith and unbelief; to say that 'there is much to be said on both sides;,' to think that all things must be uncertain in themselves, because many of the persons around us are at sea as to all things, as if one thought all things to be in a whirl, because they seemed so to our neighbors who had dizzied themselves; to be browbeaten out of belief; to shrink from avowing a steadfast adherence to that which must be old because it is eternal, and which must be unchangeable because it is true; to pick something out of revelation which, it thinks, will not be gainsaid, and to relegate all else to be matter of opinion; an indolent, conceited, soft, weak, pains-hating trifling with the truth of God." (Pusey's *Daniel the Prophet*, p. 561). I put it as a charge upon your manhood, as priests and laymen, to resist the soft effeminacy that has no answer for error but a compromise of the truth, and no way of winning battles but by surrendering the field. I charge you to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Let us consider some of the hostile elements with which our religion has to contend; and our argument shall be that, ominous in its proportions as the attack is, there is no justifying reason for timidity or irresolute conduct in the conflict which engages the Christian world.

I.

The chief point of attack, during the century, has been the Bible, "the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture," to use Mr. Gladstone's words.

It could scarcely be maintained that historical Christianity, with church, ministry and sacraments, in vital exercise of inherent functions of grace by the Holy Spirit and perpetuating themselves through the ages never more freshly than now, could lose its whole force with the depreciation of the Scriptures ; but it must be confessed that disaster at this point would have been misfortune at all points.

It has been a tremendous controversy. Almost before it reached these shores it was fought out to at least a partial conclusion by the best minds of the most scholarly nation of modern times. And yet the question was one which, applied in other directions, excites nothing but ridicule. This is the question raised by the destructive critics : Did Moses write or edit the Pentateuch ? are the synoptic gospels the product of their reputed authors ? specially, did S. John write the fourth gospel ? did S. Paul write the epistles attributed to him ? etc. An immense amount of intellectual force and erudition has been expended on these crucial questions. The sacred books have been plunged into the white heat of hostile criticism ; the writings of the critics have been spread over the world ; periodical literature has largely echoed their conclusions. The results have been perceptible. The modest doubt of scholarly minds has filtered down into the talk of the unlettered classes, and reappeared as blank unbelief, ruthless and denunciatory. For instance, the stolid infidelity prevalent among the German artisans who have emigrated to this country,—it is simply the popular reflex of what is sometimes called "the higher criticism" of German scholars ; and I fear a great many of the people who are not German have had their confidence in the historical genuineness and authenticity of the books of Scripture shaken, and tremble with the suspicion that there is no reliable written testimony for the great facts of religion.

We are in position at the close of the century to make a very calm survey of the great conflict.

We first perceive that destructive criticism has not been in harmony with itself. There have been successive critics and schools of criticism which have agreed only in having a common object, and have so far disagreed in their methods, theories and conclusions, as to

have had quite as much contention with each other as against the Book.

Then we perceive that, if assaulted as no book has been, it has been championed as no book has been; and we do glad honor to the names of Griesbach, Scholz, Hahn, Lachmann, Tregelles, Scrivener and Tischendorf, whose microscopic erudition, applied to the Scriptures in a calm and scientific spirit, has triumphantly established the sacred canon and text as being in every substantial particular what they have always been claimed to be. There is no classic writing, in Greek or Roman, whose genuineness and authenticity have been so tested or so stood the test. Tischendorf winds up his demonstration of the four gospels with this remark, "There are few instances in the collective literature of antiquity of so general and commanding assent being given to works of a historical character as to our four gospels." (Origin of the Gospels, Boston ed., p. 218).

German criticism has not only attacked the documents of Christianity as such, but has invented theories to account for them. They are spurious, but they exist. How did they come to exist?

David Friederich Strauss stands pre-eminent among theoretical assailants of the Christian facts during this century. His first book on the "Life of Jesus" appeared in 1835, in which he broached the theory that the four gospels were written late in the second century, by unknown compilers who reduced to writing current myths or legends which had developed from the obscure beginnings of the preceding century, and been gradually crystallized into their present form,—the product of oral tradition, imagination, superstition and fanaticism; and the conclusion of the argument was, If the Gospels are a late transcript of unauthenticated myths and legends, they are without authority. The book sent a shock through Europe. It was seen to be a challenge to Christianity to prove its documentary evidence or die. The Prussian government was disposed to prohibit its circulation, but the theologians said No! let us answer it. Its challenge was accepted by trained soldiers of the Cross, such eminent men as Neander, Tholuck, Dorner, Ebrard and Ullman; and what was the outcome of this battle of Titans? Why, Strauss' mythic theory was riddled to shreds. It was shown to be a clever piece of imaginative fiction, a mere hypothesis without historical basis; and the Gospels, subjected to a perfectly exhaustive criticism by their defenders, were more clearly than ever seen to be an impregnable rock. So thorough was the defeat that Baur, formerly Strauss' teacher at the Tubingen Univer-

sity, said of the theory, it "has been already rejected by every man of education up to the present day." It was soon a spent shot in Germany, and its influence is not felt in any other land, except as occasionally an unlettered mind may repeat its shattered formulas. As to Strauss himself, the exigencies of battle compelled him to shift his ground, and in his "New Life of Jesus" he held the Gospels to be not so much legends as conscious and intentional fictions. Personally, his rejection of the Gospels was succeeded by balder forms of unbelief, until, at the last, denying God and immortality, he devoted himself to music and poetry. Thus ended the great controversy, not between an old and a new view of Christianity, but between Christianity and a human invention directly opposite to it; a controversy, however, that will reappear in other shapes so long as men seek to substitute "cunningly devised fables" in place of the unchangeable truth of Christ.

Ferdinand Christian Baur, of whom we just now made mention, was the leader of the Tübingen school of sceptical negation. His pupil's theory he rejected, because, as he flattered himself, he had a more effective one. His fundamental proposition was that the supernatural is impossible. One might answer that it ought to require supernatural knowledge to justify so oracular an announcement. But the supernatural being impossible, nothing in the Gospels can be true which cannot be accounted for on natural grounds, the conclusion being that every miraculous event in the life of our Lord, from His conception to His ascension, was false. He presented his view with learning and ability, and it was espoused by many scholars as furnishing a perfectly rational view of Christianity as a natural development from natural germs. But we must remember that the nation which has given birth to so much sceptical hostility, has also furnished many forms of constructive and apologetic criticism. Baur was answered by Dorner, Lange, Hase, Bleek, and Tischendorf. It was not an easy but it was a successful tournament; for it was shown that to relegate all the phenomena of our religion to the domain of the natural order, is to demand very much more credulity and unreasonableness than is necessary in order to accept supernaturalism. The reaction which set in against Baur's theory was just the fate of a plausible but impossible fiction. At the present time its influence in Germany is almost extinct. The kaleidoscope of scholarly scepticism, however, turns ceaselessly. If Baur survives at all, it is only as other forms of negation have succeeded him, with the same destructive spirit. Echoes

of his and their discordant tones are heard in England and America. They have been heard in our own beloved Church, which has shown itself, and we believe will always show itself, unwilling to harbor treason against the Holy Scriptures.

Particular instances which have startled the Church may be suffered to pass into obscurity, but they should reveal to us that the vital questions of the time are questions within our communion, as well as in the world at large. The life-and-death conflicts of Germany have been succeeded by an era of increased faith and reverence among the Teutonic peoples, but the conflict has spread to the English speaking nations. Here in America we are in the thick of the fight. The outcry against ecclesiasticism is misleading. Those who use it are really striking at supernaturalism ; and if they are numerous enough to be what in our church-parlance we call a "school," then it is a Unitarian school, a natural-morality school, a school which accepts Christianity only as a temporary stage in the world's progress, a school which recognizes no fixed principle but the principle of fluctuation, a school of criticism and negation, whose Bible is nature, whose Church is humanity, whose God is the unknown possibility. And this is the new Christianity that is to be planted on the ruins of our bigotry and intolerance !

The assault upon the Holy Scriptures, as to their inspiration, has also been a sore trial to many believing minds ;—perhaps because it has not always been pointed out to them that it is wise to discriminate carefully here. Current hostility to inspiration is not directed so much against inspiration as a fact,—an inscrutable fact,—a fact of whose nature we have little knowledge, as against a theory of the fact. Protestantism substituted an infallible book in place of an infallible Church, and it has been maintained that the book is as infallible in letter as in every department of knowledge. A verbal inspiration was taught which reduced the sacred writers to mere phonographs for recording and repeating what came to them *ab extra*. This theory encouraged Christians to regard the Bible as a universal encyclopædia, and is largely responsible for most of the so-called discrepancies between the book and the discoveries of science. Such a theory could only produce a hard legalistic bibliolatry. It was as if one should announce just how God makes flowers, and then admire them only as the theory made them beautiful.

There is infinite relief in the simple recognition of the divine and the human forces, each working freely, both co-operating to provide

records of the faith, facts and history of early ages. The law of their co-operation is not known to us. But is not the relation of the Divine Spirit to the activities of the human mind as much a mystery in other things as in inspiration? Faith is the gift of God, and yet faith is the free exercise of the soul. How can anything that is limited exist in the universe concurrently with an unconditioned infinite Being? The mode of inspiration is but one among many unsolved problems. It is enough to know the fact, and we may wait patiently for the time when, on some higher plane of being, God may make all hidden things manifest.

As my object is simply to assure believing minds against fears, I have referred specially to the assault on the New Testament Scriptures. That the Old Testament will achieve substantial victory in similar assaults may well be anticipated. Prof. Sanday, of Oxford, has shown that the attack on the Old Testament is really an attack on the mechanical theory of its inspiration. The utmost that is likely to be accomplished is to cast some new light on the composition of the books,—the way in which they came to be classed under special names, and the readjustment of some of the dates.

II.

The world has diminished in size within half a century. One can sail around the globe now in the time it once took to reach Liverpool. The Secretary of State flashes a despatch to our plenipotentiary at the Moslem court in a few minutes. The Christian missionary has penetrated every land, mastered every language, and added immeasurably to our knowledge of the world. All nations are neighbors. Thus scholars have been supplied with immensely increased data for the study of the religions of mankind, and they have established a new branch of science,—Comparative Religion.

It has been found that many resemblances exist between Christianity and the non-Christian religions. To Christian thought such likeness presents no difficulty, for we believe in the unity of the race as to its origin, and in the fatherhood of the one God, Who accepts every man who fears Him and works righteousness. But our anti-Christian writers insist that the non-Christian religions do not suffer seriously by the comparison, and ask why they may not be admitted to fellowship with Christianity, and why it may not take its place as one of the ethnic faiths, perhaps the present best; and all, factors in the evolution of a final best? You go to Japan, and its paganism is not the

besotted savagery you were inclined to look for. You go to India and find (with the imaginative help of Mr. Arnold's "Light of Asia"), that the Buddha needs not to be ashamed to stand by the side of the Christ. Even the dwarf mothers in Congo-land love their children. This is a very plausible argument against the unique character of our religion, and it tends to weaken faith in its supernatural origin. Was Jesus, after all, just one of the grand heroes of religion?

I must express my belief that the arguments of this sort which I have seen, present more rhetoric than logic. Similarity is not sameness. And, moreover, we must consider that religions, viewed on their human side, will present certain common features, because man is man as in England so in China. The intuition of a divine existence is universal, and all human hearts crave infinite help and bow before infinite power. We must remember still further that a supernatural religion must, in many ways, take on the features and relations of a natural development. It must speak in the language of nature. It must enforce the natural virtues. Our Lord on the side of nature increased in wisdom and stature as a man. But on the divine side He was the express image of God: made like unto us in all points, save that. There is a boundary-line beyond which resemblances cease, and it is there that we discover heaven-wide differences to exist between Christianity and the non-Christian systems. This is what those who have a motive for minimizing it will be forced to admit, but the force will not be applied by those who are "all in a tremble," because Jehovah and Jupiter each begin with a J.

The poem to which I have alluded has promoted the study of Buddhism. There is a kind of dilettante scheme to establish a modernized Buddhism in the western nations. But that system is not what Mr. Arnold represents it to be. If there is a man living who is qualified by learning and long residence in India to speak with authority on the subject, that man is Sir Monier Monier-Williams, Professor of Sanscrit at Oxford. He has shown that Buddha knew nothing of the existence of any Supreme Being, that he had no idea of true holiness; that he did not claim to be a deliverer from sin, nor to provide a remedy for it. He shows that the moral precepts of Buddhism which simulate Christ's, were wholly differentiated from Christ's as to their motive. Buddha said, be good in your own strength, and get rid of all suffering and all individuality by finally attaining the annihilation of *nirvana*; but our Lord said, be good for the love of God and by the help of God, that you may find an eternal home in God. According

to Buddha man must annihilate self; according to Christ he must annihilate selfishness. Buddha demands the extirpation of all desires and affections from the breast; Christ requires them to be regulated and sanctified. Buddha tells men to trust to their own merits; Christ invites us to rest upon His. In the full-orbed splendor of the Light of the World, we learn that our personal existence is God's most precious gift; the Light of Asia tells us that it is man's direst curse.

"It requires some courage," says Sir Monier, "to appear intolerant, to appear unyielding, in these days of flabby compromise and milk-and-water concession; but I contend that the two unparalleled declarations quoted by me from our Holy Bible ['He Who knew no sin was made sin for us;'] and, 'I am the life'], make a gulf between it and the so-called sacred books of the East, which severs the one from the other utterly, hopelessly, and forever,—not a mere rift which may be easily closed up, not a mere rift across which the Christian and the non-Christian may shake hands and interchange similar ideas in regard to essential truths, but a veritable gulf which cannot be bridged over by any science of religious thought. Yes, a bridgeless chasm which no theory of evolution can ever span." (Speech before the Church Missionary Society).

Christianity has nothing to fear in the crucible of honest comparison, but she must resist the conclusions of those whose method is to make much of resemblances and to minimize differences. The Christian student of comparative religion has no motive for disparaging the "broken lights" of paganism, because by conceding to all points of correspondence their full value, he can all the more vividly show the startling contrasts which distinguish them from Christianity. It may not seem to be "liberal," as that word is defined by our enemies, to abhor and reject the centaur with a Christian body and a Buddhist head; but Christians are called to be stubbornly faithful to truth rather than amiable towards error.

III.

The thinking world is listening very intently in our day to the advocates of a new philosophy, some of whom make short shrift of Christianity by questioning the existence of God. There are Christian evolutionists as there were Christian Platonists and Christian Aristotelians; but the evolutionists of the left wing would sweep away supernaturalism and agnosticise the race of mankind. While we recognize the menace, we have no right to be demoralized by it.

We must adhere rigidly to our definitions. Christianity, on its human side, is the religious operation of man's nature, by creed, cult, and life, towards God as revealed in and by our Lord Jesus Christ. In all *its essential features* it has been a fixed quantity through the whole course of its existence on earth. It is not a philosophy; that is to say, it does not profess to furnish an exhaustive view of the universe and of the underlying principle of all things existing, and of all things occurring. It accounts for all things in the one word "God" (Gen. i. 1), but it honors the boundaries with which God has circumscribed it, by not seeking to state God's "How" or "Why," with respect either to mind or matter. But it does not deny the legitimacy of our right to employ our intellectual powers upon the unrevealed problems, nor does it deny that philosophy, rightly used as the hand-maid of religion, may lend ardor to faith and solemnity to worship. But reason is a circumscribed faculty; it can only soar to the height of its atmosphere. It may seek to state the principles on which all knowledge and all being ultimately rest; but the gift of infallibility does not belong to it. Evermore there will be heights of possible truth which it cannot reduce to thought or language. Philosophy, at best, is no more than speculation, or a guess at the ultimate explanation of the facts of the universe. One man's guess may be ridiculous; another's may be plausible, but this will be at the utmost only a plausible speculation. I do not see how one can read the history of philosophy without perceiving that it is simply a succession of guesses founded on partial phenomena, and leading to mere presumptions. The rapidity of the succession shows soon each system has been discovered to be imperfect, unsatisfying, vulnerable. Doubtless, in the twentieth century, the Spencerian theory, as Spencer states it, will have found its home in the catacombs of the dead philosophies.

While Christianity is a religion and not a philosophy, it has been the mistress of learning and the foster-mother of intellectual research, giving cordial welcome to any products of truth; but it has suffered much from attempts to unify religion and philosophy,—a vain attempt, because one is a fixed quantity, and the other a fluid quantity. "Every union of philosophy and religion is the marriage of a mortal with an immortal; the religion lives; the philosophy grows old and dies. When the philosophic element of a theological system becomes antiquated; its explanations, which contented one age, become unsatisfactory to the next, and there ensues what is spoken of as a conflict between religion and science; whereas, in reality, it is a conflict between the

science of one generation and that of a succeeding one." (Professor Salmon, Trinity College, Dublin).

The essential elements of religion have not fluctuated, but have survived in imperishable vitality. So far as the influence of converted Platonists could make it so, Platonism was the reigning philosophy in the primitive Church, but, as a system, it exercised only a passing influence on Christian thought. Its beautiful mysticism could not redeem the system from decay. But the Christian religion did not die with it.

The Gnostics, after accepting religion, sought to state its truth in the speculative terms of their "gnosis falsely so called" (I Tim. vi. 20), so that revelation might meekly take its place in their reasoned-out system of nature; and we can now plainly see that if Christianity had become seriously infected with their compromising spirit, and had surrendered religion to philosophy, it would have been buried in the grave of Gnosticism.

If time permitted, I think a survey of the history of religion would show that while Christianity never has contemned speculative thought, nor refused to profit by its valuable contributions, it has steadily, resolutely, refused to subordinate the Gospel to philosophy, or to contemplate the elements of religion, clustering around the imperial event of the Incarnation, as a mere department in the scheme of the universe which some strong but arrogant thinker may have devised. The interest of self-preservation has prevented it, and the evanescence of these pretentious systems has justified the instinct.

The reigning philosophy of the day may strike out a spark of truth, but Platonism is waiting in midnight's gloom for the Spencerian eventide. The Light of the World shall shine on. Other lights will rise to wax and wane, but the eternal splendor of Christ shall illuminate the world's way to God.

I have spoken of Christian evolutionists. There are such; that is, there are theologians who recognize a principle of evolution in the universe, and who, with no compromise of the truth, stand in awe before the sublime generalization of which they catch glimpses. But there can be no Christian Spencerians, because in Spencer's system God is unknowable, and the supernatural is impossible. It is evident, however, that there are some who, while unwilling to accept his agnosticism, accept his naturalism; and what is left to them of Christianity? Only a beautiful human life and heroic death; and, after that, a baleful growth of scriptures and creeds, a tangle of superstition and eccle-

siasticism, nineteen centuries of Christianity without the Christ Who died and was buried.

It would be easy to surrender such a Christianity. One might as well preach the beautiful dead Buddha as the beautiful dead Christ. But this is not the Christianity to which we have sworn loyalty as good soldiers ; its very first fact is the manifestation of God in human flesh, wholly a supernatural event ; and church, ministry, sacraments, scriptures, creeds, ethics, worship, are the necessary outcome of that primary fact. When the citadel is surrendered, there is nothing more to give up,—all goes when it goes. Whatever may seem to be left is in no sense Christianity. It is another religion, and shame upon the dishonesty that seeks to commend it by using the name of Him Whom it betrays.

That there are soldiers who surrender, shows how fierce the battle is, and it may be that the worst is yet before us. Certainly the hour has arrived for good soldiers of Jesus Christ to endure hardness, like those who counted not their lives dear that they might testify the gospel of the grace of God ; surely the hour has arrived for rejecting with scorn the imputation of bigotry, because we will not surrender nineteen centuries of Christian history, and the charge of superstition, because we worship an incarnate God ; surely the hour has more than come for a mighty shout of protest to rise from the whole Church of God against the infatuated minds who have adopted theories which will compel them to disown Jesus Christ for the forthcoming greater than He to whom their theories point.

The supreme lesson of history is the persistence of Christian truth through ages of assault. That persistence, when perceived, becomes a stinging rebuke to timidity, and a challenge to courage and fidelity.

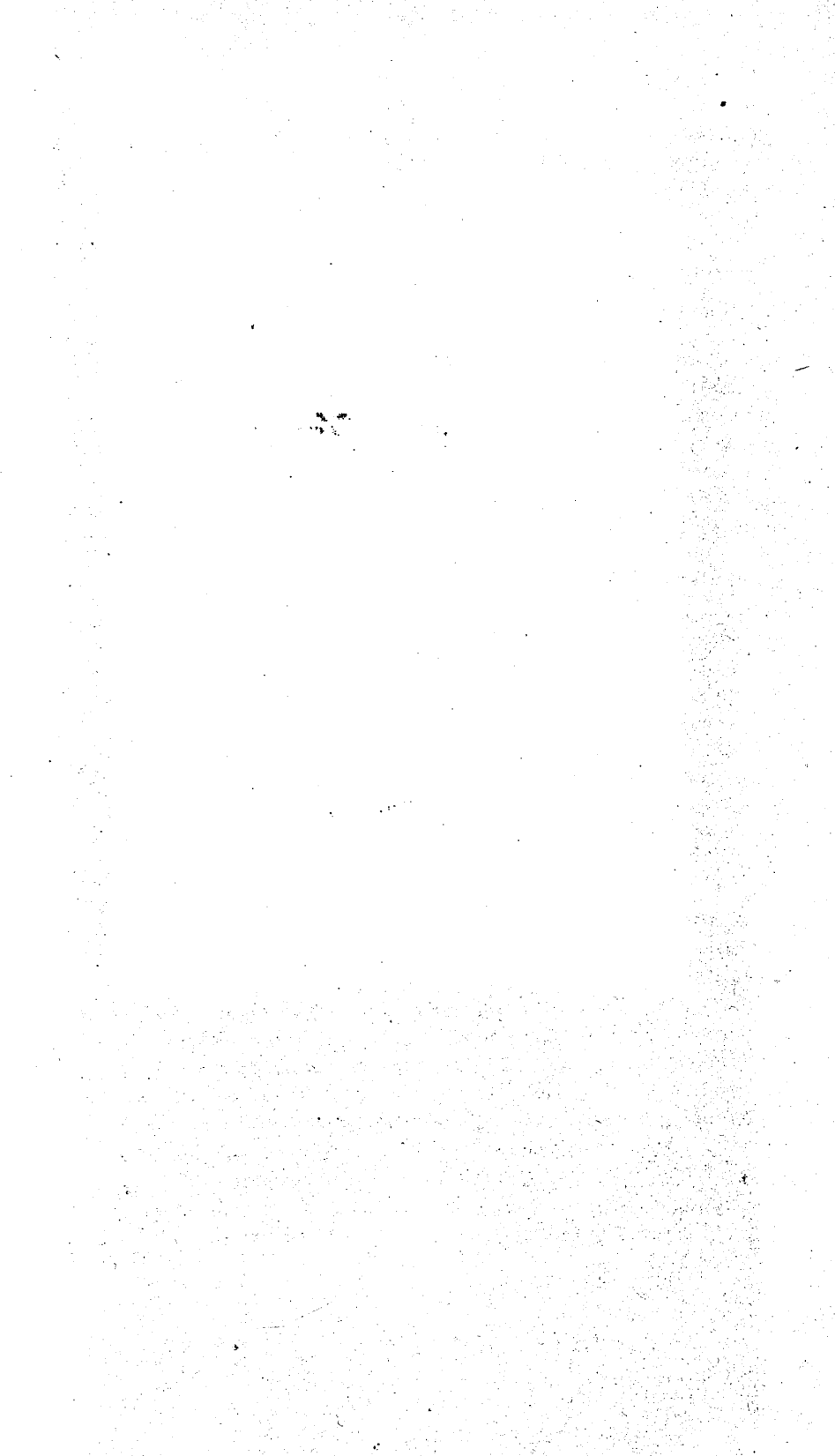
As to practical measures by which error is to be overcome, we do not fear that the faith will want champions fully equipped to meet every foe in the future as in the past. But there is a feature of the present revolt against supernatural truth, which cannot be contemplated without alarm. The modern arena of the conflict is the page of ephemeral literature circulated everywhere. Every error has its organ, and some organs advocate every error. The pulpit gets a hearing in the world at large only through the columns of the daily paper, which shows habitual preference for the sermon that is revolutionary and destructive. There is no concealment of this partisanship, and there is no doubt about its effectiveness. It has created an atmosphere of doubt. It is demoralizing many who are assumed to be

soldiers of Christ. It is making it hard for many to be absolutely true to truth without incurring the charge of bigotry ; and yet there is no bigotry so inquisitorial as that which indulges in the current cant about breadth and liberality, as though he only were " liberal " who co-operates with the Torquemadas of the press !

The only available escape from this tyranny lies in the direction of the circulation of the literature of defensive Christianity and the earnest study of it by Christian people. Many persons who would scout the imputation of sciolism in their earthly pursuits, are content with a degree of ignorance, as Christians, which exposes them to errors a thousand times refuted. We need soldiers who know their weapons, where to find them, and how to use them. I am not willing to understate the need of this. We are in the thick of a great fight. What Neander said of Germany fifty years ago, is true of us ;—the controversy is one of life or death. Our little questions about services are trifles thin as air compared with this issue of the truth of the creeds. It makes one sick at heart to see soldiers fighting about uniforms, when common enemies are plotting to scatter the whole army. Give us Christian men and women who, by virtue of active study, know the truth so well that they can distinguish it from error at sight, and who can furnish intelligent reasons for the faith that is in them.

This Church of ours has always assumed to represent the conservative spirit. This was the very genius of the Anglican reformation. She was absolutely loyal to ancient truth, as being in itself unchangeable, and what she expelled from her system she truthfully called the accretion of error that was not ancient. By every pledge of her honor she has been faithful to the religion that is enshrined in her formularies, and she stands committed to the conservation of the Faith contained in the creeds historically interpreted. Where God Almighty placed her, there she stands. It would be an outrage on those thousands who, by her invitation, have sought within her pale for a definiteness of creed, an orderliness of regimen, and a type of spiritual life which was not to be found elsewhere, should she now surrender to any fashion of the hour,—any whim of a conceited age. It would be disloyalty to herself and her own past, should she permit herself to be demoralized as she passes through a hostile territory. Her only safety is in steadfast fidelity to herself as she is ; for to become a sharer in the disintegration that is going on in the modern Protestant world, would be to seal her fate.





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